



Smithsonian Folkways

Being Creative with Hindustani Vocal Music

A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

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Summary:

Students learn about Hindustani vocal music and rhythm using a number of Hindustani songs. By the end of the lesson students should be able to sing scales, improvise over a drone, as well as listen to and discuss Indian music.

Suggested Grade Levels: 9-12

Country: India

Region: Northern India

Culture Group: Hindustani

Genre: World

Instruments: Hand Drums, Voice

Language: Hindustani

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies

National Standards: 1, 2, 3, 6, 9

Prerequisites:

- Ability to sing by rote
- Basic rhythmic knowledge

Objectives:

- Learn by rote both the vocal line and percussion line for the attached warm-up sheet
- Divide into parts and warm-up on the attached sheet with percussion, ascending/descending half-steps on repetitions
- Learn the basic notes of Raga Shuddh Kalyan
- Improvise two measure vocal phrases using a variety of notes from Raga Shuddh Kalyan
- Identify Indian instruments used in the recordings
- Verbally explore different types of Indian music with partners

Materials:

- Warm-up sheet (attached)
- Smithsonian Folkways recording “Gorbandh”, an Indian folk-song performed by Shumar Khan Langa - Sindhi Sarangi; Noor Mohmad Langa - Gujaratan Sarangi; Alladin Langa – Vocals. From *Musician Communities of Rajasthan - Sarangiya Langa* (ARCE00010_102)

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/shumar-khan-langa-alladin-noor-mohmad/musician-communities-of-rajasthan-sarangiya/india-world/music/album/smithsonian>

- Smithsonian Folkways recording “Charkho”, an Indian folk-song performed by Shumar Khan Langa – Sindhi Sarangi; Noor Mohmad Langa – Gujaratan Sarangi; Alladin Langa – Vocals. From *Musician Communities of Rajasthan – Sarangiya Langa* (ARCE00010_106)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/shumar-khan-langa-alladin-noor-mohmad/musician-communities-of-rajasthan-sarangiya/india-world/music/album/smithsonian>
- Basic audio playback equipment
- Hand Drums (or some type of non-pitched percussion)
- Piano/Keyboard

Lesson Segments:

- 1. Warming Up in Another Culture** (National Standards 1, 2, 9)
- 2. Exploring the Basics of Hindustani Improvisation** (National Standards 1, 2, 3, 6, 9)
- 3. Contextualizing and Exploring Hindustani Musical Performances** (National Standards 6, 9)

1. Warming-Up in Another Culture

- a. Teach the first vocal line of the warm-up by rote at a piano so pitches are accurate.
 - i. Write rhythmic motives on the board and take volunteers to play hand-drums
 - ii. Split the remaining singers and have one half sing the drone on the warm-up sheet
 - iii. Combine percussion, vocal drone, and rhythm and sing/play through the first line on a middle register pitch
- b. Teach the second line of voice and add it to the warm-up and sing through.
- c. Swap parts and ascend or descend based on the needs of the group for warm-ups.

Assessment: Students will be able to sing/play warm-up in its entirety and ascend/descend by half-steps and stay in key.

2. Exploring the Basics of Hindustani Improvisation

- a. Teach students the basic Raga.
 - i. Sing through song/scale a few times
- b. Sing through the Raga on the warm-up sheet one more time and then have the class sit in a circle and have everyone sing the drone for the chosen key.

- i. While drone is being sung either have a volunteer play the basic rhythmic motives from the warm-up in Lesson Segment 1 or play them yourself
- ii. Students will then take turns around the circle improvising basic two measure phrases however they wish on the first two notes of the Raga
- c. As proficiency with the activity increases students may decide to add the subsequent notes of the Raga.

Assessment: Each student participates in the activity by improvising two measures of singing and also by possibly taking a turn playing rhythms with the percussion instrument(s).

3. Contextualizing and Exploring Hindustani Musical Performances

- a. Split up the class into groups of three or four students and listen to “Gorbandh” and “Charkho”.
 - i. In the students respective groups discuss what they find similar and/or different about the two pieces after having listened to both songs a couple times
 - ii. Focus on basic musical attributes (i.e. pulse, instrumentation, number of performers, etc)
 - iii. Have someone in each group make notes of what their group comes up with
- b. This time listen to “Gorbandh” once to refresh memories and then listen to “Raga Shuddh Kalyan”.
 - i. Discuss what they find similar and/or different about the two pieces.
 - ii. Focus on basic musical attributes (i.e. pulse, instrumentation, number of performers, etc)
 - iii. Have someone in each group make notes of what their group comes up with
- c. Come together as a class and have each group present ideas of what they found similar and dissimilar.

Extension: As a possible follow-up activity, or possible extra-credit project, ask students to choose between the two styles played in class (Indian classical or Indian folk music) and research attributes of one of the songs. Students may focus their attention on one of the basic musical attributes discussed in their group. For example, a student may do a brief research assignment on the instruments used in “Gorbandh”.

Assessment: Each student is able to valuably contribute to his or her group discussion.

Warm-up Guide

Sing on loo, doo, mah, may, etc...

Arne Phillips

Voice

Drone

Percussion

Rim

Centex

Detailed description: This system contains the first four measures of the warm-up. The Voice part is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The Drone part consists of four measures, each with a whole note chord (W) and a half note chord (bw) on the same string. The Percussion part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, with a 'Rim' symbol under the first measure and a 'Centex' symbol above the second measure.

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Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 through 8. The Voice part continues the melodic line. The Drone part has four measures, each with a whole note chord (W) and a half note chord (bw) on the same string. The Percussion part continues the rhythmic pattern from the first system.

Notes of Raga Shuddh Kalyan, 5 Note ascending, 6 note descending.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 through 12. The Voice part continues the melodic line. The Drone and Percussion staves are empty, indicating that the student should improvise or play freely in these parts.